# *Two Letters touching the* Trinity *and* Incarnation. *The First urging the Belief of the Athanasian Creed. The Second, an Answer thereto.*

## The First LETTER.

*Loving Cousin*;

IT'S no small Trouble to me to hear you are fallen into the *horrid* Heresy of the Socinians and Arians, *viz.* to deny the Holy Trinity and Incarnation of our Saviour: For you commend a printed Sheet, that is dispersed under the Title of *Brief Notes on the Creed of St.* Athanasius, and are not afraid of the Damnation which is there pronounced against all such as do not firmly believe the Doctrines contained therein, which have been always and are at this Day held to be the *Great Fundamentals of Christianity*. And I take them to be so clearly revealed in Holy Scripture, that no Man well acquainted with Scripture, (as you are) can disbelieve them, without some *Wantonness and Pride of Understanding, a great Conceit and Confidence of their own Knowledg, and such unpardonable Immodesty, as admits of no Excuse: And though such Persons may be otherwise pious and useful Men, yet there's no Reason why they should not be damned as well as devout and vertuous Jews and Heathens.*

I always took you for a *modest Man*, and one that had a great Reverence for what is revealed in Holy Scripture. But if you now *resolve never to allow that to be the Sense of the Revelation, however plain and evident the Words are, which is not agreable to your Reason, but will put another Sense upon them, though never so forc'd and violent*, as in this Controversy you do; I can no longer account you modest, but that you now betray the Pride and Conceitedness, which before lay hid, and that if you persist in the Denial of the supream Divinity of the Son of God and of the Holy Ghost, you are to be rejected of all good Christians as an Hereticks, *one that is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* For that it is not consistent with any Man, but him that has long indulged in himself that Arrogance and Singularity which stops his Ears to sober Truth, and shuts out of his Heart the Fear and Awe of God, or at least never sets himself seriously before the Divine Tribunal in the Consideration of these Matters (as I am perswaded befals some heady and hot Controvertists) to shut his Eyes against *the Meridian Light* of these *necessary* Doctrines, the Foundation of Christian Religion as it is Christian. For *the Mystery of the Trinity runs through it, and gives it all the Strokes of Life and Greatness*, as it is a positive Religion different from natural. I beseech you therefore, Cousin, retire your self into your own Heart, and set our Lord Jesus upon his Throne before your Eyes, and consider what you will answer to him, whom you have denied to be your God, and say he is but a made Lord, and that as a Mediator he is not God-Man, but Man only; and concerning the Holy Ghost,

in whose Name you are baptized as well as in the Father and the Son, you yet deny him to be another Divine and Almighty Person. Consider, I pray, that *the Doctrine of the Trinity is not a speculative Point, but that the whole Frame of Christianity is built upon it, and that it is necessary to support both our Christian Worship, and our Christian Hope and Comfort.* Consider also that all Heresies are *Works of the Flesh*, which notwithstanding many great Bishops, and some great Councils have been guilty of, even in this Point denying of three equal Persons in God: And we know, that for many Ages the Church of *Rome* has maintained the gross Heresies of Transubstantiation, and Idolatrous Worship of the Host, with many other Superstitions; all which shew that our corrupted Wills and Passions are as inclinable to Heresy and Superstition as to other Vices and Immoralities. *Faith is a Christian Virtue, and a Man shall be punished for the Faults of his Understanding as well as any others. We must be as careful then to bring our Reason to whatever is divinely inspired, as our Will to whatever is divinely commanded.* I beseech you therefore again and again, examine your Conscience seriously, and the Holy Scripture sincerely. Do not impose upon your self to your own Destruction, by uncouth, nice, unintelligible and trifling Distinctions, for God will not be mocked. Sincerity is necessary to every good Christian, and they that want it shall have their Portion with Hypocrites and Sinners. As you hearken to this altogether necessary Advice, you shall have me,

Your Condoling, or

Congratulating Kinsman.

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# The ANSWER.

*Dear Cousin;*

AS I was meditating on the little or no care Christians take of their own Salvation, that unhappy Carelessness afforded me the true Reason of their being so little concerned for the Salvation of their Neighbours: I am glad to hear you are not of that Number, and I don't question but you will be pleased that I am none of them neither, and that following your Example, I desire your Salvation with as much Earnestness as you do mine. Most of those whom the Church has set up for the Conduct of Souls, are much more earnest to get Preferments, and defend the Party wherein they are ingaged, by subtil Disputes and violent Persecutions, than sincerely to examine the Doctrines which they teach, and feed their Flocks with those pure and solid Truths, which free from Sin and Error: Nor do they think that thereby they become accountable before God's Tribunal for all the Wandrings of their Disciples. And lastly, that both the blind Guide, and the Blind whom he guides, shall fall into the Ditch. Do but separate from their Study whatever is profane, and belongs not to the Character of a Pastor, and the Treasure of their Minds will soon be exhausted; therefore imitate them not in such a Disorder. For my part, though I am a *Lay-man*, I think I am bound earnestly to exhort my Brethren, and you particularly, to restore the Principle of our Reformation, which is almost degenerated into Popery; and to make use of *our own Light*, that we may be able to keep the Way set before us in the Scripture: This is the Protestants Right, we are in Possession thereof, and we must not suffer our selves to be deprived of it.

I beseech you, dear Cousin, in the Name of God, to consider, that when we were first delivered from the Roman Tyranny, we inveighed

veighed againſt the abſurd Doctrines, that were impoſed upon our Faith, we cried down the Word of Men, and recommended only the Word of God, *the Bible, the Bible, the Bible* only, ſays *Chillingworth*. But we no ſooner got out of our former Slavery, by the help of ſo clear a Light; but we are fallen into a new one by a moſt unequal Conduct. The Queſtion is no more concerning the pure Word of God; it is, ſay they, too equivocal and uncertain, and it is no hard Matter for Hereticks to make it agree with their particular Opinions. What then? we hear of nothing but Fathers, Tradition, Councils, Creeds, and new-coined Words, on purpoſe to keep Chriſtians within the Bounds of the Faith of their Anceſtors; Metaphyſical Terms, whereof Men have no fixed Notion, and yet they ſtop the Mouths of Hereticks, by making the Church ſpeak more clearly and reaſonably than the Holy Ghoſt did. But this is not all; ſome of the ſame Men who inveighed ſo much againſt the Inquiſition and Popiſh Violences, ſet up among themſelves a Holy Inquiſition, and will hear of no Toleration, but oppreſs the Liberty of the Chriſtians, who dare ſpeak out their Mind, ſo far are they from venturing on Writings and a publick Profeſſion. One would think that by our many Diſputes with the Roman Church, concerning Infallibility, we have acquired the Privilege thereof to our ſelves.

Give me leave therefore, dear Couſin, ſince you call me to God's Tribunal, to ſummon you to the ſame. Pray tell me, Ought we not to fear that God ſhould require from us the Truth of the Holy Scripture, with which we have been intruſted; that Light which we have put under a Buſhel, and his gracious Talent, which we have buried? If he aſks, from whence we took thoſe *profane Novelties of a Science falſly ſo called*, I mean that moſt ſtrange and barbarous Language in his Church, *O Holy, Bleſſed and Glorious Trinity, three Perſons and one God, have Mercy upon us*; What ſhall we anſwer him? What if he ſhall oblige us to give an Account of our Faith of that monſtrous Creed of *Athanaſius*, with which we honour our great Holy Days, and which you mention as the moſt illuſtrious Monument of the Faith of our Fathers. Where is the Scribe, where is the Philoſopher of this World, that can anſwer him to one of thoſe many nonſenſical Articles? How came ye, will he ſay, to find in my Word *one Eſſence and three Perſons, rather than one Perſon and three Eſſences?* By what Partiality have you diſcovered a Figure in theſe Words, *This is my Body*, and have found none in theſe, *The Word was God?* Why did you diſtinguiſh two Natures in the Chriſt, whom I ſent you, whilſt you refuſed to admit of two ſorts of *Being* in the Sacramental Body, which he gave you? You were afraid of thoſe Words, *To eat the Fleſh, and drink the Blood of the Son of God*; and you had no Repugnancy for the literal Senſe of theſe, *A Virgin brought forth God; The Jews crucified God?* He can aſk a thouſand ſuch Queſtions, to which we ſhall be able to give no reaſonable Anſwer, by reaſon of the Inequality of the Reverence we pretend to pay to his Word, and of our Unſtedfaſtneſs in the Uſe we make of our Reaſon and Senſes.

In Effect, I would fain have our Teachers to tell us by what Principle of Philoſophy, by what Rule of Language, that Concluſion is right and neceſſary, *viz.* the Father is a Divine Perſon, the Son is a Divine Perſon, the Holy Ghoſt is a Divine Perſon; *Therefore there are three Divine Perſons:* and this ſhould not likewiſe be ſo; The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghoſt is God; *Therefore there are three Gods?* Doth not common Reaſon tell us, that thoſe two Concluſions are like this? *Gabriel, Raphael*, and *Michael*, are three Angelical Perſons; *therefore they are three Angels?* The ſame might be ſaid of *Peter, James* and *John*, who are both three humane Perſons, and three Men. This Principle of natural Reaſon ought to prevail, unleſs we are taught by the Scripture, that three Divine Perſons are not the ſame with three Gods, or that a God is three Perſons, and three Perſons a God. But where doth

it tell us ſo? What Texts can they alledge that are clearer to prove that Myſtery, than thoſe alledged by the Papiſts are, to prove their ſuppoſed Myſtery of one Chriſt and many Bodies, and of many Bodies and one Chriſt? How is it that with reſpect to the Sacrament, we are helped by our Senſes to put a reaſonable Senſe upon the Scripture; but with reſpect to the Trinity, Reaſon forſakes us ſo far, as to aſcribe to Scripture an abſurd Senſe, and contrary to its Simplicity? Is the Light of a ſenſible Man more certain than that of an underſtanding and reaſonable Man? Have we a greater Certainty, that a Piece of Bread is not a humane Body, than that two and one make three? Is the Myſtery of Chriſt's Sacramental Body more ſuitable to our Apprehenſion, than the Myſtery of his real and natural Body? How come we to know that there is ſomething that is incomprehenſible in that Man, whom we ſee born and dead, and that there is no ſuch thing in the Bread which we take and eat? A God is joined to that, ſay ye, and why not to this? But we ſee ſtill ſome Bread, will ye reply. It is true, your Senſes do not deceive you: But have not the Apoſtles too ſeen with their Eyes, and touched with their Hands, the Man, who is called the Word of Life? and their Senſes have not deceived them. This is true, who can doubt of it? How ſhall we come off? Shall we fly to another Nature hypoſtatically united to this, which is the Object of our Senſes? But then the Heretick, who err about the Sacrament, may have Recourſe to the ſame Shift, to avoid the Teſtimony of the Senſes. Some will ſay that the Senſes can judg only of the Species which remain in the Sacrament; Some, that there is an inviſible Object in the Bread, which is the glorious Body of Chriſt; Some that there is an hypoſtatical Union of that Bread with the eternal Word, which raiſes the Myſtery ſo much above our Reaſon, that it loſes thereby the Right and Liberty of judging thereof, and lies under the Neceſſity of ſubmitting to the Authoriry of the Revelation, which is clear upon this Point; for it ſays, *This is my Body*. Now if our Reaſon is raſh in the Judgment it bears concerning the Incarnation, notwithſtanding the Evidence of the literal Senſe of the Scripture, which is on her ſide; what Raſhneſs will it not be to interpoſe her Judgment in the Myſteries of Conſubſtantiation and Tranſubſtantiation, againſt the expreſs Revelation of God's Word, *This is my Body?*

I will only ask you one Queſtion upon this Matter, and I deſire you to anſwer me in the Fear of God, and the Sincerity of your Heart. Why do you think you may with Dr. *Wallis* ſay, that the Terms of *Perſon, Father, Son, Begotten*, &c. are metaphorical, whilſt you cannot endure that thoſe you call Hereticks ſhould uſe the ſame Right, and according to Reaſon and Scripture, pretend likewiſe that the Title of *God* aſcribed to Chriſt, is alſo a metaphorical Expreſſion? Can any thing be more unjuſt? Furthermore, why do you take the Liberty to explain the Words of the Euchariſt thus, *This Bread is the Repreſentation and the Figure of my Body?* And why do you deny me at the ſame time the ſame Liberty, when I explain the Words in the Beginning of St. *John*'s Goſpel by theſe, *And the Word was the Image of God?* Your Injuſtice is ſo much the greater, becauſe I may ground my Interpretation upon other Expreſſions of the Scripture, wherein Chriſt is formally called the Image of God, and becauſe you have no expreſs Texts of the ſame Scripture wherein the Sacramental Bread is called the Figure of Chriſt's Body. Now neither in my Propoſition nor in yours, the Image cannot be the Original. As the Bread hath but a Conformity of Qualities with Chriſt's Body, not the ſame Qualities, and the ſame Subſtance: Thus Chriſt, as he is the Image of God, cannot have the ſame Qualities nor the ſame Nature with God: He only hath the Impreſſion of the Divine Subſtance, which God hath communicated to him, by honouring him with his Unction, bearing Teſtimony to him, and crowning him with Glory as a Reward of his Sufferings: *Becauſe he humbled himſelf to the*

*the Death of the Croſs, therefore the Father hath highly exalted him, and hath given him a Name which is above every Name.* Now if Chriſt hath been dignified with that high Name, by reaſon of his Obedience and Vertue, it follows from thence, that he had it not by the Priviledg of his eternal Generation: For if ſo, the pompous Deſcription of Chriſt's Elevation ſet down in the Goſpel would be but a Shew and mere Pageantry.

Therefore, dear Couſin, if you find in thoſe clear Texts of the Scripture the true Reaſon of Chriſt's being called God; believe me, do not fetch any other from the extravagant Notions of the Athanaſian Creed, wherein neither you nor I can apprehend any thing, except we apprehend nothing. Notwithſtanding you are ſo bold as to pronounce againſt me a Sentence of Damnation upon the Words of that doting Writer, (who was not *Athanaſius*) and even to damn all thoſe who will give no Credit to his Ravings, let them be never ſo pious and charitable. O ſtrange Prejudice of Men! As for me i'le make bold likewiſe to tell you, that how falſe and ill grounded ſoever the Aſſurance of Salvation may be, which that Author promiſes to thoſe that believe his Viſions, it is yet more falſe, that thoſe good Chriſtians who refuſe to believe them, ſhall be damned. For there is nothing more certain and clear in the Goſpel than this, *viz.* That all honeſt and pious Men ſhall be ſaved, and that all thoſe who ſhall be ſaved, will be ſaved without believing the curious Myſteries of the pretended *Athanaſius*. Do but peruſe all the Evangelical Promiſes, and look if you can find any one that promiſes Salvation to thoſe who believe *the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity*; I can ſhew you a thouſand which make Salvation ſure to Piety, or to a Faith inconſiſtent with the Faith of *Athanaſius*. What Guide ſhall we then follow, this *Creed* which ſays, That *whoſoever will be ſaved, ought to believe three Divine Perſons, and one Divine Eſſence*, or *Chriſt*, who aſſures us, that *eternal Life conſiſts in acknowledging his Father the only true God, and himſelf Chriſt Jeſus to be he whom the Father hath ſent*, that is to ſay, the Meſſias? What Creed ſhall we pitch upon to be the Badg of our Chriſtianity, either the new ones, which ſpeak of *God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, as three equal Perſons*, or the ancient Creed of the univerſal Church, commonly called the Apoſtles Creed, which only ſpeaks of *God the Father, Jeſus Chriſt his Son, and the Holy Ghoſt*, without giving the Title of *God* to theſe two laſt? and which expreſly aſcribing to the Father the Attributes of the Godhead, of *Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth*; aſcribes only to the Son that which is only conſiſtent with a Man, and cannot be aſcribed to the ſupream God without Blaſphemy, *viz.* That *he was conceived, born, died, was buried, and raiſed?*

Now as it is not the Language of the Apoſtles Creed, to ſay, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt; ſo it is neither the Stile of the Scripture, which never gives the Title of God to Chriſt, when it joins him with the Father, in thoſe Places wherein it ſets before us the Objects of our Knowledg and Worſhip, and makes, as it were, a kind of Form or Confeſſion of Faith. The Reaſon of it is this, Chriſt is God with Reſpect to the Empire which he hath received from God over the new Creatures, which he hath taken out of the Chaos of Sin, and governs by his Father's Power: But with Reſpect to God his Father, he is only the Miniſter of his Will, his Meſſenger, and is at moſt called *the Lord*, which is a Term of Inferiority in the New Teſtament, to denote him whom the Father hath made his Lieutenant, who hath received his Empire from another, and is to deliver it to him, that intruſted him with it; *God*, ſay the Holy Apoſtles, *having made him Lord and Chriſt*. According to this Rule, which the Scripture exactly follows, it doth not only deny the Title of God to Chriſt in the Abridgments of Faith which it affords; but it is wont to aſcribe it only to the Father exclusively of the Son, ſaying expreſly, that *the Father is the only true God*, and *the Son the only Lord*, as often.

often as it puts together those two Objects of our Faith. And in this remarkable Opposition it is that we are to look for the true Sense of the Scripture about this Mystery; not in those other Places wherein it doth not affect the same Exactness. Here, dear Cousin, I intreat you again, if you are a true Lover of Truth, seriously to consider those Texts of the Gospel upon which my Remark is grounded. *This is Life eternal*, says Christ to his Father, *to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. But to us*, says St. *Paul*, *There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things; and we by him. One God*, says the same Apostle, *and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus.* Where is the Trinitarian, who on such an occasion would not say, *One God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?* yet there is no mention made of the Holy Ghost; and as for the Son he bears only the Title of *sent*, *Lord* and *Mediator*, that of *God* being not at all bestowed upon him in those Places? Who is the Trinitarian that would not say on the last cited Place, *One God, and one Mediator between God and Men, Christ God-man?* But *God-man* is too barbarous an Expression, and the Holy Ghost is too wise to make such a Conjunction. Lastly, who is the Trinitarian, who would call the Father, *the only God, the only true God*, to distinguish him from the Son, by opposing God to Man, the only God to the only Lord and Mediator, in a Word, the Father to the Son, and one Person to another? Do they not pretend that the Father cannot be called the only true God, but by Opposition to the false Gods of the Heathens? But the Holy Apostle doth not only oppose him to the Idols of the Pagans, as the true one to the false ones, but to the only Lord, whom Christians worship; inasmuch as God by Excellence, God by himself, is opposed to the inferior and subordinate Gods, whom he hath made such out of his Grace and Liberality, *I said, ye are Gods: But to us*, says the Holy Apostle, to us Christians, *there is but one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ*: Two Objects of our Faith really distinguished; the one by the Name of *one only God*, the other by the Title of *one only Lord*. From whence it follows, as I have already said, that Christ indeed is God, or rather a God, if considered as the Head of all the new Creatures, which God hath subjected to his Empire; but when joined to the Father, this Title vanishes away, and he bears only that of his Minister and Ambassador; so true it is, that before the true and supreme God, any other God besides him must fall and disappear.

You accuse me of wresting the Scripture, yet you see how I have brought you to the Necessity of putting a hard Sense upon it, if you will maintain your Hypothesis. The Texts that I alledg to you are clear and formal, and you cannot avoid the Strength of them, but either by a Philosophy altogether incomprehensible, or by some gross and contradictory Shifts, or by a pitiful Wrangling, or even by Impiety and Blasphemies. The Number of such Shifts is endless, and I shall be contented to bring an Instance about every one of those, which I have just now intimated. When we alledg that Creed of Texts, which say, that God is *one*, you fly to that famous Distinction of *one Essence and three Persons, and three Persons and one Essence.* If at the same time we alledg those primitive Facts of the Gospel, wherein we see a most exact History, not of *a God*, but of *a Man* like unto us, who was born, died, and was raised; you answer with another Distinction of *two Natures and one Person, and one Person and two Natures.* This is your *incomprehensible Philosophy*, which will have *one* to be *three times one*, three times himself: and pretends that by Virtue of I know not what hypostatical Union, a Man is the supreme God, and the supreme God a Man; so that it may be said, *The most high God was born, the most high God died.* O! Who shall raise him from the dead? Again when we shew that the Question concerning Christ's Divinity was decided by himself before the Jews, who accused him that being a Man, he made himself

self equal to God; when one shews you, I say, that Christ vindicates himself from Blasphemy, by protesting that he said he was the Son of God, only in such a Sense as is approved by the Law, founding his Right, not upon an eternal Generation, but upon a Heavenly Commission and Unction, just as the other Gods, whose Example he alledges, *If those are called Gods, to whom the Word of God came, &c. say ye that I blaspheme, because I said, I am the Son of God?* When one sets before you so clear a Decision, and at the same time so favourable to those you call Hereticks, how do you make shift? You say that Christ spake only according to the Need of the Jews, that there was no Necessity for him to give them further Instructions. Yet at the same time that you return this curious Answer, which supposes that it was enough for the Jews, that Christ should teach them, that he was *a God by Office*, you make an Objection taken out of the same Discourse of Christ, wherein you pretend that he told the Jews he was *God by Nature*, when he says, that *he and the Father were one*, which Words you insist upon to prove the Unity of Nature. This I call your *gross and contradictory shifts*. Again, when one cites the famous Text of St. *John*'s Gospel, wherein Christ makes *eternal Life to consist in knowing the Father the only true God*, &c. What do you answer to so strong an Objection? You put upon those Words a most forced and unnatural Sense, and say that they ought to be translated thus, *This is Life eternal, to know that thou Father and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, are the only true God.* This I call your *rash and impertinent Wranglings*. In effect you are so bold as to make use of this in your Disputes, to make shift as well as you can. But none of your Orthodox Translations durst take the same Liberty, neither the Latin, nor the English, nor the French, nor the German, nor the Dutch, *&c.* And I am sure that if you would undertake a new Translation, you have still Modesty enough not to fly to so shameful an Extremity. Lastly, (for I should never have done, were I willing to insist upon every thing) when one shews you in the 13*th* Chapter of St. *Mark*, that Christ is not the most high God, since he was ignorant of the Day of Judgment, (for God knows all things) *of that Day*, says Christ, *no Man knoweth it, not the Son, but the Father only.* In answer to this unanswerable Objection, you put into Christ's Mouth a *Jesuitical Equivocation*, pretending his meaning was, that he knew it not *as a Man*, though he knew it well *as God*. This I call your *Impiety and Blasphemy*. Methinks, dear Cousin, you should blush to impute to Christ *a mental Reservation*, which you so much detest in the Priests of the Church of *Rome*. Read Dr. *Stillingfleet* in his Sermon upon *Matth.* 10. 16. *pag.* 31, 32. The common Answer, says he, (speaking of those Priests Equivocations) is, *That in Confession the Priest doth not know as Man, but as God, and therefore when he is asked any thing as a Man, he may deny what he knows as God.* But the Doctor shews the Folly and Absurdity of this Answer, 'Because, says he, this 'doth not salve the Contradiction; for to 'say, *he doth not know*, is as much as to say, 'he doth not any way know it, which is false, 'if he doth know it *in any Capacity*, because 'he knows it *as a Priest*, and as such he is 'not God, but Man. Give me leave therefore to look upon the Words you put into the Mouth of Christ, who is Truth it self, as an Impiety and a Folly. *He doth not know it*, signifies that *he doth not any way know it*, which is false, if he knows it *in any Capacity*. Furthermore, it is false, that he doth not know it *as Man*, since he knows it *as Mediator*, and as such he is not only God, but *God and Man*, say you. This is a Pattern of your unnatural Explications. I pass by a great many others, to be short.

For the same Reason, I will only undertake to overthrow *the two Foundations* of your Mysteries; which being done, nothing remains to build your Faith upon. The one is *the eternal Generation*, and the other *the Incarnation* or the Union of the two Natures. To begin with the eternal Generation; it is no difficult

difficult thing to demonstrate to you, that it hath no ground in the Scripture. For forasmuch as Christ, as you say, is God only upon the Account of his being *begotten* of God, or being *the Son of God*, we have nothing to do but to consult the same Scripture, to see upon what grounds the Title of *Son of God* bestowed upon Christ is founded therein. And if among those Reasons alledged by it, that of an eternal Generation is not to be found, it will necessarily follow, that such a Generation is the Invention of your Teachers. Let us pass by, if you will, that famous Place, wherein the Angel grounds the Title of Son of God upon the miraculous Conception of our Saviour in the Womb of a Virgin by the Power of the Holy Ghost: *The Holy Ghost*, says he to the Virgin, *shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* Again, let us omit that remarkable Passage, wherein Christ derives his Title of Son of God from his Unction and Heavenly Commission, *Say ye that I blaspheme whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the World, because I said, I am the Son of God?* It seems to me impossible to find two Causes or two Reasons of Christ's being the Son of God, more clear and express than these two; *because* he was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the Womb of a Virgin, and *because* the Father hath sanctified him, and sent him into the World. However I will not insist upon them, to stay the longer upon those, in which the Word *to beget* is expressly set down. I know but three Texts belonging to this Subject: The first is in *Acts* 13. 33. where it is said, that God hath begotten his Son by raising him from the dead; *God*, says the Apostle, *hath fulfilled the Promise unto us, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee.* The second, *Heb.* 5. 5. where it is expressly set down, that God hath begotten his Son, by making him his High-Priest: *Christ*, says the Apostle, *glorified not himself to be made an High-Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to Day have I begotten thee.* The third is in the same Epistle, *chap.* 1. 5. where the same Apostle tells us, that God hath begotten his Son by exalting him above the Angels: *For unto which of the Angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee?* In all these Texts there is no other Generation mentioned, but what is grounded upon the high Glory, which God hath conferred upon his Messias, by raising him from the dead, and making him Lord and Christ. And this Generation is so far from being eternal, that it is expressly said, it was performed *to day*, viz. the Day of his Resurrection and Ascension. Your Teachers have been often challenged to produce one single Text of Scripture, wherein the eternal Generation is expressly contained, and is the true Ground of Christ's being called the Son of God. If there is any, you will do me a Kindness to let me know it. Till this be done, I ought to acknowledg no other Generation, but what the Scripture teaches, in those clear and express Texts which I have cited. Hereupon I will acquaint you with an Observation, for which I am beholden to a learned Man, *viz.* That there is a vast Difference between the manner of the Father's speaking of Christ's Divinity, and that of the Apostles. The first fetch'd his Original from I know not what Generation, which was made in the Beginning of the World: it is almost the only Generation spoken of by them, and their Platonick Stile always runs that way. On the contrary, the last shew the Source of it in his miraculous Birth, especially in his Resurrection and Exaltation. Hence it is that though Christ never called himself God, whilst he had but a Glimpse of his future Glory; yet the Apostles made no Scruple to honour him with that glorious Title, when they saw him crowned with his highest Glory & Honour. Now that Difference in treating of the same Doctrine, which is to be seen between the sacred Writers and your Teachers, is a material one, and ought to convince you, that they had not both the

the ſame Principles, as your Church pretends. This general Obſervation concerning the Fathers, is ſufficient to make me refuſe their Teſtimony, and look upon them as no good Interpreters of the Scripture, and unfaithful Guardians of Tradition.

I come now to *the Incarnation* or the Union of two Natures. You muſt confeſs, dear Couſin, that if we can from any Place learn the Diſtinction of two Natures in Chriſt, it is undoubtedly from *Rom.* 1. 3. where he is called *the Son of* David *according to the Fleſh*, and *the Son of God according to the Spirit of Holineſs, by the Reſurrection from the Dead.* Here is the Son of *David* and the Son of God, the Fleſh and the Spirit, or the Word. Yet this Text is ſo far from proving two Natures in Chriſt, ſuch as you underſtand, that it is the ſtrongeſt Argument that can be brought againſt you, to confute that fooliſh and abſurd Diſtinction, and the cleareſt Commentary we have, to explain the other Paſſages, which ſpeak of Chriſt as a Man and a God. To be convinced of the Truth of this Aſſertion, you need only compare together the 23*d*, 28*th* and 29*th* Verſes of the 4*th* to the *Galatians*: The Apoſtle ſays, that *Iſmael was born according to the Fleſh*, or that he was the Son of *Abraham* according to the Fleſh, that is, according to the ordinary Courſe of Nature; but that *Iſaac was born according to the Spirit*, or by a miraculous Birth, that is, he was not ſo much the Son of *Abraham*, as the Son and Heir of the Divine Promiſe. This is granted by all. Now according to St. *Paul*'s Stile, it is plain that Chriſt is *the Son of* David *according to the Fleſh*, that is, according to his natural Birth, becauſe he was born of a Woman, and *Son of God according to the Spirit*, viz. according to his ſupernatural Birth, becauſe he was born of a Virgin by the Operation of the Holy Spirit, and becauſe he was raiſed from the dead, according to the Spirit of Holineſs, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks: In which Senſe he is not ſo much the Son and Heir of *David*, as the Son and Heir of God, or the Son of that great Promiſe, which God had made to the Patriarchs. *According to the Spirit*, can therefore ſignify only *by the Divine Power*, by his miraculous Birth and Reſurrection: Which plainly ſhews that the Diſtinction of two Natures, in the Senſe you take them, is a mere Fancy; becauſe the eternal Generation is not at all mentioned by the Apoſtle in his Oppoſition between the Son of *David* and the Son of God, the Fleſh and the Spirit, the Humanity and the Divinity of Chriſt; and becauſe, ſpeaking of thoſe two Natures, taken in a right Senſe, he ſays, that Chriſt did partake of this laſt, when he was conſtituted the Son of God, not by an eternal Generation, but a Divine Sanctification, and the Virtue of his Reſurrection.

From what hath been ſaid, it doth plainly appear, dear Couſin, that thoſe are truly *Hereticks*, who forſake the Simplicity and Purity of the Scripture, to coin Myſteries unknown to that Divine Revelation: Unknown, I ſay, as it is evident from the new Words that have been coined to expreſs them: Which ſo plainly argues their Novelty, that any one that is but ſincere, muſt needs be no leſs prejudiced againſt the ſtrange Words of *Conſubſtantiality* and *Incarnation*, than againſt the monſtrous Term of *Tranſubſtantiation*. They have both the ſame Original, Growth and Scope, and conſequently, with reſpect to us, they muſt have the ſame Deſtiny, and be look'd upon by all good Chriſtians, as the Effects of humane Paſſions, and the diſmal Cauſes of our Diviſions. In this you do condemn your ſelves. For if you pretend to teach the ſame Doctrines, which are taught in the Scripture, why do not you uſe the ſame Words? Your new Terms do betray your Cauſe, and plainly ſhew, that according to the Character of an Hereticks ſet down by St. *Paul*, you do act not only againſt your own Conſcience, but againſt the Deſign of the Holy Ghoſt: Seeing you can never ſpeak differently from him, but you muſt perceive at the ſame time, that you think differently, and by changing his Words, alter his Notions too.

It is an eaſy thing to change a Doctrine by the Help of a new Word, eſpecially when to this new Word another is added, and the Explication thereof extended as far as poſſible, as Councils commonly do, who under Pretence of clearing Truth to its higheſt degree of Evidence, do ſo far depart from its Simplicity, that they quite loſe the ſight of it: ſo that it may be ſaid, that after ſo many new Pieces have been borrowed and ſewed to that firſt Garment, it hath loſt its Form and Colour, and is no more the ſame Cloth. But leſt you ſhould ſay, that it is ſtill the ſame Doctrine, expreſſed ſeveral ways, I ſhall prove the contrary in few Words. Obſerve therefore, (dear Couſin) that when the Scripture or the Creed of the Apoſtles, (which is for the moſt part made up of ſcriptural Terms) ſets down any Capital Doctrine, it makes uſe of ſo plain and intelligible Terms, either proper or metaphorical, that they may be underſtood by all Men. None can be deceived by them, if he is ſincere: For Example, when the Apoſtles Creed ſays, that there is *an Almighty God, Maker of Heaven and Earth*; that that moſt high God hath *a Son, who was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, was born, died, was raiſed from the Dead*, &c. any one preſently apprehends with the whole Catholick Church, what is an Almighty God, Creator of all things; and what is a Son of God, who is his only Son, becauſe none but he hath a Virgin for his Mother, and God for his Father; what it is to be born, to die, and to be raiſed from the dead, and ſuch other Terms, whereby the Doctrines of our Religion are expreſſed. There is no Diſpute about them, becauſe all Chriſtians have the ſame Notions of them: ſo that the Hereticks who rejected the Doctrines contained in them, were forced to reject thoſe Scriptures, wherein they were mentioned. But pray how dare you pretend that the Terms which you have contrived, were contrived to ſignify the ſame things, ſeeing they are not commonly uſed by Men, being all taken out of Philoſophy? Beſides, their Signification is liable to ſo many Changes and Alterations, that ſometimes they ſignify one thing, and ſometimes another. This is ſo true, that the very Men of that Age in which they were coined, could not agree about their natural Meaning, one Doctor taking the Word *Hypoſtaſis* for that we call *a Perſon*, and another for that which we call *a Subſtance*; one Council rejecting the Word *Conſubſtantial* as favouring Hereſy, and the other looking upon it as a Word fit to confute it. What may be the Reaſon, that when the Holy Ghoſt ſpeaks, his Words are ſo popular and ſo clear, that reaſonable Men cannot miſtake the meaning of them? How comes it to paſs, that there is no Diſpute among Men concerning theſe Words, *Son of God, who was conceived of the Holy Ghoſt, was born, died*, &c? But when Men ſpeak, and introduce a Son *conſubſtantial with the Father, begotten, not made*, &c. ſome do not underſtand them at all, let them be never ſo reaſonable; ſome, though very teachable, cannot endure ſuch a Language; and ſome diſagree about their meaning, though every one of them conſiders it with a good Intention, and in the Fear of God. You need but conſult your *Divines* hereupon; ſome by *three Perſons* underſtand *three Relations*; ſome, *three Capacities*; ſome, *three Minds*; ſome, *three Somewhats*; and ſome, *three individual Natures*, as *Peter, James*, and *John*. The Reaſon of that Difference is obvious and plain: The Holy Ghoſt ſets before us the Divine Revelation full of Wiſdom, and accommodated to our Knowledg, and he fixes popular Notions to his Terms: But Men join to their Words remote, abſtruſe and metaphyſical Ideas, and they put ſuch an unnatural Senſe upon the Word of God, that even when they uſe it, it is only to defend their fooliſh and extravagant Fancies.

Do not tell me that it was wiſely done by the Church, to coin thoſe new Words, that the Senſe of the Scripture might be fixed thereby, and the Liberty of Hereticks ſtop'd. So pitiful an Excuſe doth not juſtify your Raſhneſs, it only juſtifies the Innocence of the

the pretended Hereticks. For *what could hinder thoſe Hereticks, whom you accuſe of wreſting the Scripture, to uſe the ſame Subtilty, in order to the eluding of thoſe new Terms, which you will have them to ſubſcribe to?* They could eaſily do it, by putting upon them ſuch a Senſe as would not be prejudicial to their Opinions. However this very thing, *viz.* their refuſing to ſubmit to thoſe new Impoſitions, is an undeniable Argument of their Sincerity: and if they cannot be brought, though in order to the ſaving of their Lives and Eſtates, to put an unnatural Senſe upon Mens Words, which they deſpiſe; much leſs will they wreſt the Senſe of God's Word, to which they pay the greateſt Reverence. From whence it follows, dear Couſin, that you your ſelf are a Heretick: I am ſorry to tell you ſo, but you force me to it. I have yet ſomething more to ſay to you, give me leave to ſpeak it out; for I do impart my Thoughts to you not in Anger, but with a Deſire of making you more attentive to thoſe things, in which your Salvation is ſo much concerned. I mean that you run the Danger of being one of thoſe *Antichriſts* ſpoken of by St. *John*, when he ſays, that *whoſoever doth not confeſs that Chriſt, who came in the Fleſh,* (for thus it muſt be rendred) *the ſame is Antichriſt.* For firſt, ſince Chriſt ſignifies *Anointed*, an Antichriſt is one that is an Enemy to the Lord Chriſt's Anointing. Now do not you deſtroy that Divine Unction, pretending that Chriſt is the Son of God by an eternal Generation, which makes him uncapable of Unction or Exaltation, and overthrows that Fundamental Truth, *viz.* that *God made him Lord and Chriſt?* Secondly, ſince *to come in the Fleſh*, ſignifies to come not like a conquering Prince, but like a Man of Sorrows, do not you deſtroy *his Fleſh* and Sufferings, pretending on one hand, that he is *the moſt high God*, who can neither be born, nor die; and on the other affirming, that Chriſt hath not the proper *Perſonality* of a Man, but *the borrowed* Perſonality of the eternal Word? ſo that according to your Notions, the Holy Virgin did not bring forth a Man, but *an humane Nature*; the Jews have not crucified a Man, but *an Humanity*. An humane Nature is but an *Ens rationis*, and a mere Fancy: an Humanity can neither be born, nor die, nor be raiſed; which overthrows the firſt Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and may convince you of mere *Antichriſtianiſm*. For my part, dear Couſin, I can boaſt, Thanks be to God, of a contrary Character, *viz.* that *he that confeſſeth that Jeſus, who came in the Fleſh, is Chriſt, is born of God.* For I do not believe him to be the moſt high God, who can neither be born, nor die; but I believe he is *a Man like unto us in all things, Sin excepted, who died for our Sins, and was raiſed for our Juſtification.* I confeſs at the ſame time, that *Jeſus is Chriſt the Lord, to the Glory of God the Father, who hath highly exalted him, and given him Power, Might, Honour and Glory.* I am amazed to ſee that inſtead of building your Faith upon the Rock of that ſolid Confeſſion, you will by all means found it upon ſuch Doctrines as have no Influence upon Practice. What Advantage is it to your Religion to reckon *three Almighty and three Incomprehenſible Ones*, as Objects of Confidence and Worſhip? Is Infinity capable of more or leſs? Is one the richer for having ten thouſand, than one only infinite? But to believe the only all good, wiſe, juſt and Almighty God was pleaſed to manifeſt himſelf to us by his *Meſſias*, who is the Prophet that declares his Will to us, the King who engages himſelf to fulfil his Promiſes, and the faithful and merciful High-Prieſt, who can be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities: This, I ſay, is the Notion of a moſt wiſe Religion, which contains a great many Doctrines, wherewith the Mind is enlightned, and the Heart moved, a firm Support to our Faith, a ſolid Foundation to our Hopes, and a thouſand Encouragements to Holineſs of Life. I exhort you, dear Couſin, to a ſerious Conſideration of ſo ſimple, but ſo rich a Religion. Do it with an honeſt and ſincere Heart, and I hope by God's Grace, that ſo great a Light will ſcatter the Miſt that ſurrounds you, and help you to overcome the

Prejudices of a Party. For it is to be presumed that they are on your side; and one that owes his Religion to his Birth and Education, ought always to mistrust them. You are already gone a great way, adopting St. *Augustin*'s Maxim, *viz. That whatever Expression of the Scripture seems to command a Crime, must needs be figurative.* Go on and be sure, that any Expression of the Scripture, which seems to require the Belief of an Absurdity and a Contradiction, must needs be figurative. The Reason is the same, for if the Scripture cannot require of you any thing that is contrary to the natural Notions you have of Piety; for Example, to eat humane Flesh; it can neither impose upon your Belief any thing that is contrary to your natural Ideas of Truth; as for Example, That a Man who dies is the living and immortal God. I leave it to your Consideration, recommending you to God, and the Word of his Grace. I am,

Dear Cousin,

Yours, &c.

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# POSTSCRIPT.

*Dear Cousin*;

AFter a second Reading of your Letter, I have observed some Fragments of the Writings of your Teachers, which you took the Pains to transcribe, and upon which you seem to rely much as upon good Authorities. I shall tell you, that several of your Teachers have over-strained the Matter, and that a modest Man ought not to depend upon their Expressions. Some others have been so inconstant in their Judgment concerning Heresies, that they have blown hot and cold with the same Mouth, according to the several Circumstances they have been in. However we need only, in opposition to them, to consider the Testimony of some more wise and moderate Divines, whose Names are no less eminent and respected in the Church of God. These are so far from damning devout Christians that are in Error, that they will not damn devout and virtuous Jews and Heathens. Do but read *the Christian Life, Vol.* 3. *p.* 2. wherein Dr. *Scot* tells you, that *to live according to mere natural Reason, is all that God expects from those to whom Christianity hath never been proposed:* and as for those to whom it hath been sufficiently proposed, he lays upon them no other Obligations, but those wherewith Christ hath strengthned natural Religion. 'Since Christianity, says he, hath improved the Duties 'of natural Religion upon new Principles, 'and inforced them with new Obligations; 'to render our Piety and Vertue strictly and 'properly Christian, it is necessary that we 'should receive those new Principles, and 'act according to those new Obligations. But lest you should dispute about those Principles and Obligations, which the Gospel adds to natural Religion; I shall abridg this Dispute by a fine Place taken out of *the Design of Christianity*: The pious Author of that excellent Book says, (*p.* 236.) that if one would be sure that one keeps the Foundation of Christianity, and is in no damnable Error, he must examine himself thus: 'Am I sincere-'ly willing to obey my Creator and Redeem-'er in all things commanded by them? Do 'I entertain and harbour no Lust in my 'Breast? Do I heartily indeavour to have a 'right Understanding of the Holy Scriptures, 'and chiefly of the Gospel, and to know 'what Doctrines are delivered there, in or-'der to the bettering of my Soul by them, 'and the Direction of my Life and Actions 'according to them? If we can answer those

'Questions

'Queſtions in the Affirmative, (*who can 'doubt but all pious Heretick may do it*) what-'ſoever Miſtakes we may labour under, they 'can be none of them ſuch as will undo our 'Souls, becauſe we ſhall have Cauſe to con-'clude from thence, that the Deſign of Chri-'ſtianity is in ſome meaſure effected in us: 'And whatſoever Tenets may be accompa-'nied and conſiſt with the true Love of God, 'and a ſollicitous Care to keep a Conſcience 'void of Offence towards him and Men, we 'may be certain that they belong not to the 'Catalogue of fundamental Errors. This 'obedient Temper is the moſt infallible Mark 'of an *Orthodox* Man; he that is endowed 'with it, though he may err, cannot be an '*Heretick*. If I was as bold as you, dear Couſin, I would apply to you a fine Paſſage of our worthy *Arch-Biſhop of Canterbury*, in his Sermon upon *Luke* 10. 42. wherein he blames the Raſhneſs of thoſe, who like you dare cenſure Error and Hereſy in others, whilſt they themſelves do not think *of curing thoſe Luſts, Vices and Paſſions, which ſo viſibly reign in them.* But I ſhall only cite that gene-ral Reflection of his concerning thoſe pre-tended Orthodox. *Deluded People*, ſays he, *that do not conſider that the greateſt Hereſy in the World is a wicked Life; becauſe it is ſo directly and ſo fundamentally oppoſite to the whole Deſign of the Chriſtian Faith and Religion, and that God will ſooner forgive a Man an hundred Defects of his Underſtanding, than one Fault of his Will.*

And to ſhew you in one Word, that when you attribute *Immodeſty, Wantonneſs and Pride* to Hereticks, you act againſt the Spirit of your Church; the Teſtimony of one of your Teachers only will ſuffice, ſince he ſpeaks for the whole Clergy: I mean the Au-thor of *the Vindication of the conformed Clergy from the unjuſt Aſperſions of Hereſy:* (That Here-ſy was no leſs than *Pelagianiſm* and *Socinia-niſm.*) See how he vindicates your Teachers. 'The Reaſon, ſays he, why they are accuſed 'of Hereſy, is their Moderation in Points of 'Controverſy. They do not confute their 'Opponent with a rude and inſignificant 'Noiſe, nor think they ſhall ever convince 'him by hard Words and ill Names, which 'are the only Arguments that ſome Men are 'able to manage; but they conſider and are 'willing to make Allowances for the com-'mon Infirmities of humane Underſtandings, 'and the ſtrong Prejudices of Education: 'and therefore they treat all Men gently, and 'are not rudely clamorous in their Diſ-'courſes, but hope the beſt, and think as 'charitably as they can of thoſe that are of 'a different Perſwaſion. See the Moderation of your Church, imitate ſo charitable and Chriſtian a Judgment, and ceaſe to damn, like Jews and Heathens, proud and conceit-ed Men, thoſe good Men, who work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling, leſt with what Judgment ye judg, ye may be judged. The ſame Author will tell you, that the Term of *Heretick* is a Name that is given now-a-days liberally, and at a good rate, and that, 'It is nothing but the Paſſion 'of the Opponents, that hath made that 'Name ſo very common as it is; for it is 'grown no more now than an ordinary Term 'of Reproach, for every angry Man, that 'would fain be dealing with controverſial 'Divinity, that it ſerves for one of the prin-'cipal Topicks for the great Profeſſors of ar-'tificial Scolding, *&c.* Read but *p.* 70. As to that *great Conceit and Confidence of their own Knowledg*, of which you think Hereticks are ſo full, that *they reſolve never to allow that to be the Senſe of the Revelation, however plain and evident the Words are, which is not agreeable to their Reaſon, but will put another Senſe upon them, though never ſo forced and violent:* As to this, I will tell you; Firſt, that they have borrowed that Method from the very Princi-ple of the Reformation. When, dear Cou-ſin, thoſe Words of Chriſt are objected to you, *This is my Body*; *My Fleſh is Meat indeed: My Blood is Drink indeed: Whoſo eateth my Fleſh, and drinketh my Blood*, &c. When, I ſay, thoſe Places of the Scripture are objected to you, who follow the Spirit of the Reformation, *Are you not reſolved never to allow that to be the Senſe of the Revelation, however plain and evident thoſe Words are, which is not agreeable to*

*your Senſes and Reaſon; and will you not put another Senſe upon them, though never ſo forced and violent*, as in effect you do, when you ſay that by *the Body* of Chriſt is meant *the Figure of his Body; by eating his Fleſh, to believe in him*, &c? But I have already touched that Article in my Letter, and therefore I ſhall inſiſt no longer upon it. Secondly, Who puts upon the Scripture a more unnatural Senſe than you do in this Controverſy? Who hath a greater Pride of Underſtanding, and is more conceited of his Reaſonings? Hereticks ſo called, make Religion to conſiſt in the Profeſſion of a ſimple Faith, which they expreſs in the very Terms of Scripture, holding faſt the Form of ſound Words, ſo afraid they are to indulge their Reaſon too much, and to wreſt the Language and Intention of the Holy Ghoſt. But you on the contrary, who rely altogether upon humane Expreſſions, taken out of the Pagan Philoſophy, metaphyſical Arguments and Abſtractions, or remote Conſequences; you, I ſay, muſt needs violate the ſacred Reverence due to God's Word, put a forced Senſe upon the Words of the Holy Ghoſt, and ſhew at the ſame time a proud Confidence, by making the Scripture ſpeak any thing that agrees with your Notions. There is not *one* Word or Propoſition in that Scripture, but will ſignify quite *contrary things*, according to your Diſtinctions and Conſequences. You diſtinguiſh between the Son of Man, and the Son of God, yet you confound thoſe two Terms, when you think fit, and make the Son of Man to be the Son of God, and the Son of God to be the Son of Man: If we ſay that it was the Son of Man that came down from Heaven: you reply, that the Son of Man ſignifies there the Son of God. If we object that the Son of God knew not the Day of Judgment; you anſwer, that by the Son of God in that Place is meant the Son of Man: If one asks you, What's the Name of the firſt Perſon of the Trinity? you anſwer, *the Father*, and inſiſt earneſtly upon that Diſtinction of Perſons, to avoid the Force of this Objection, *viz.* That if Chriſt were the moſt high God, he would be the Father of himſelf. But if we object, that the Father only knows the Day of Judgment, and that he only is the true God and Creator of all things; then the Word *Father* ſignifies no more what it ſignified before, I mean the firſt Perſon of the Trinity, but the whole Trinity, and the very Son whom he hath begotten: ſo great is your Skill in doing and undoing the Work of the Holy Ghoſt, by contradicting Hereticks in Seaſon and out of Seaſon. Let this ſuffice as to what concerns Words. The ſame may be ſaid of the Propoſitions of the Scripture, either affirmative or negative. By the enchanting Virtue of your Diſtinctions, the Affirmative becomes Negative, and the Negative Affirmative, when there is any need of it, and two contradictory Propoſitions are equally true and divine, if at any time it can ſerve your turn. It may be ſaid, that Chriſt hath wrought Miracles, and hath wrought no Miracles; that he knew not the Day of Judgment, and knew it; that he was born, and not born. In a word, one may overthrow the whole Goſpel and Creed, all thoſe Contradictions are Orthodox, if one doth but keep in his Mind the bleſſed Diſtinction of two Natures, which directs the Intention, and hinders a Man from telling a Lie.

By ſuch Tricks as theſe you pretend to Orthodoxy, and boaſt of a Principle that promotes Holineſs and Piety; and, as you ſay, hath a great Influence upon all the Parts of Religion. But, dear Couſin, don't you know that the learned Dr. *Hammond*, who made a large practical Catechiſm, could find no Place in his Book for the great Spring of the Trinity? No queſtion but he look'd upon it as a thing altogether uſeleſs and uncapable of moving the Heart of Man. Make no doubt of it, it is a dry and empty Opinion, a Bone without Marrow or Meat, which can afford a Chriſtian Soul no ſort of good Nouriſhment in order to Piety. I confeſs there is a Trinity that hath Influence upon the Life of all true Chriſtians, *viz.* that in which you and I have been baptized, the Father, the

the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt. But I muſt confeſs at the ſame time, that it is very different from yours, if underſtood according to Scripture. We have the Doctrine of the Father revealed by his Son, his Interpreter and Meſſias, and confirmed by the Gifts and Miracles of the Holy Spirit. This Doctrine hath ſo neceſſary an Influence upon the Practice of Chriſtians, that without a right Knowledg of that Revelation we could neither obey God's Commands, nor hope for his Rewards. And I confeſs, that with reſpect to this primitive and capital Truth, any Man to whom that great Object is propoſed, ſhall be no leſs accountable for the Faults of his Underſtanding than the Vices of his Will. There is a plain Reaſon for it, *viz.* that this Object doth not conſiſt in Philoſophical Speculations, which the Simple cannot attain to, and the Ignorance whereof muſt needs be excuſable; but in plain and ſenſible Facts, for the believing of which, nothing elſe is required but the ſame Honeſty and Sincerity neceſſary to practiſe the Precepts. For Example, We believe a Father, Creator of all things; a Son born, dead, raiſed, *&c.* and a Holy Ghoſt ſetting the Seal of his Miracles to that Revelation. Here is a Faith grounded upon undeniable Facts, which doth not require from us a ſeraphick Underſtanding, but ſome Honeſty to receive the Teſtimony of thoſe who relate them with as much Evidence as is neceſſary to ſatisfy an honeſt and reaſonable Mind. The Want of Faith or Underſtanding in this Reſpect, is the Want of Probity and Uprightneſs; and therefore the Fault is inexcuſable. But if inſtead of ſo ſimple and ſenſible a Faith, you introduce your *Athanaſian* Faith of three Eternal, Almighty, and Incomprehenſible Ones, you make Unbelief of all things the moſt pardonable, nay, and the moſt reaſonable too, becauſe ſuch a Faith is above the Reach of our Senſes, Reaſon, and Revelation. So that we muſt read in the Goſpel, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from Babes, and haſt revealed them unto the Wiſe and Prudent.* I can aſſure you that not only many eminent Biſhops and great Councils have rejected the Belief of ſuch a Myſtery, as you confeſs it, but that no good Chriſtian knew it, except perhaps in his Catechiſm, or a Book of Controverſy. How many Monuments of Antiquity have we loſt, of which we could boaſt with great Reaſon? Who can tell but moſt Fathers had been on our ſide, if the Malice of their Enemies, the Superſtition of Monks, and the Flames of the Emperors had not deſtroyed their Books? As for thoſe that remain, nothing but this can be concluded from them, *viz.* that the Party that prevailed (Hiſtory tells us by what means) took Poſſeſſion of Tradition and Orthodoxy. However we have ſtill in the Apoſtles Creed the Primitive Truths, which unite all Chriſtians, the ſaving Truths wherewith God's Providence fed the Faith of Chriſtians during the Quarrels of their Teachers, and the only Truths, for whoſe ſake true Martyrs have ſhed their Blood. I ſhall add, that the ſame Providence hath preſerved in all Sects and Ages a Body of Chriſtian Morality, which makes the great and whole Deſign of the Goſpel. Let us conclude here, and ſeriouſly think, dear Couſin, that you and I ſhall be judged by Chriſt in the laſt Day only according to this Rule, independently on thoſe Opinions, which now a-days make the Subject of our Diſputes. I reſt,

Yours, *&c.*

*FINIS.*

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